

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

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1. An image forming device, comprising:

a communication unit connecting the image forming device to  
an external support center via a communication line and receiving  
and transmitting information by a communication with the support  
center;

an error detecting unit detecting an error of the image forming  
device;

a first warning unit controlling, when the error is detected by  
the error detecting unit, an operation/display unit to display a repair  
call activation menu thereon that indicates a defective condition of  
the image forming device and enables a user to decide whether  
activation of a repair call transmitting function is allowed or not;

a second warning unit controlling a warning device to produce  
at least a warning sound indicating the defective condition of the  
image forming device; and

a warning executing unit executing selectively one or both of  
the warning control of the first warning unit and the warning control  
of the second warning unit, wherein, when the defective condition of  
the image forming device continues for a time, exceeding a  
predetermined period, without taking any repairing action, the

warning executing unit executing either one of the warning controls of the first and second warning units or both.

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2. An image forming device, comprising:

a communication unit connecting the image forming device to an external support center via a communication line and receiving and transmitting information by a communication with the support center;

an error detecting unit detecting an error of the image forming device;

a first warning unit controlling an operation/display unit to display a repair call activation menu thereon that indicates a defective condition of the image forming device and causes a user to decide whether activation of a repair call transmitting function is allowed or not;

a second warning unit controlling a warning device to produce at least a warning sound indicating the defective condition of the image forming device; and

a warning executing unit executing selectively one or both of the warning control of the first warning unit and the warning control of the second warning unit, wherein, when the error is detected by the error detecting unit, the warning executing unit executing the

warning control of the second warning unit, and, when the defective condition of the image forming device continues for a time, exceeding a predetermined period, without taking any repairing action, the warning executing unit executing both the warning controls of the first and second warning units.

- 10           3. An image forming device, comprising:
- a communication unit connecting the image forming device to an external support center via a communication line and receiving and transmitting information by a communication with the support center;
- 15           an error detecting unit detecting an error of the image forming device;
- a first warning unit controlling, when the error is detected by the error detecting unit, an operation/display unit to display a repair call activation menu thereon that indicates a defective condition of
- 20           the image forming device and enables a user to decide whether activation of a repair call transmitting function is allowed or not;
- a second warning unit controlling a warning device to produce at least a warning sound indicating the defective condition of the image forming device; and
- 25           a warning executing unit executing selectively one or both of

the warning control of the first warning unit and the warning control of the second warning unit, wherein, when the error is detected by the error detecting unit, the warning executing unit executing the warning control of the second warning unit, and, when the defective condition of the image forming device continues for a time, exceeding a predetermined period, without taking any repairing action, the warning executing unit executing the warning control of the first warning unit.

4. The image forming device according to claim 1, further comprising a warning condition setting unit that changes initial setting data, including a validity flag of the first warning unit and a validity flag of the second warning unit, in accordance with user demands.

5. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the second warning unit controls the warning device to produce any combination of a warning sound, a synthesized voice or music, and a flash light.

6. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the warning executing unit controls, when a repair call button of the repair call activation menu is depressed, the communication unit to transmit a repair call to the support center via the communication line.

7. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the second warning unit and the warning executing unit are activated even when the image forming device is set in a power-saved standby mode.

8. The image forming device according to claim 1, further comprising a warning condition setting unit that changes initial setting data, including a predetermined period value, a warning duration value, a warning interrupt duration value and the number of repeated warning attempts, in accordance with user demands.

9. The image forming device according to claim 1, further comprising an operation restart/stop unit that stops the warning control processes of the first and second warning units during an arbitrarily set stop period and restarts the warning control processes at an end of the stop period.

10. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the warning executing unit inhibits, when a cancel button of the repair call activation menu is depressed, the repair call transmitting function to transmit a repair call to the support center via the communication line.

11. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the warning executing unit executes the warning control of the second warning unit when the image forming device continues to be in a running state over a predetermined running period.

12. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the warning executing unit executes the warning control of the second warning unit when the image forming device continues to be in a waiting state over a predetermined waiting period.

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13. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the warning device includes a speaker and a built-in flash.

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14. The image forming device according to claim 2, further comprising a warning condition setting unit that changes initial setting data, including a validity flag of the first warning unit and a validity flag of the second warning unit, in accordance with user demands.

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15. The image forming device according to claim 2, wherein the warning executing unit controls, when a repair call button of the

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repair call activation menu is depressed, the communication unit to transmit a repair call to the support center via the communication line.

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16. The image forming device according to claim 2, wherein the warning executing unit inhibits, when a cancel button of the repair call activation menu is depressed, the repair call transmitting function to transmit a repair call to the support center via the communication line.

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17. A remote monitoring system including a host computer of a support center and an image forming device which are connected together via a communication line, the image forming device comprising:

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a communication unit connecting the image forming device to the host computer of the support center via the communication line and receiving and transmitting information by a communication with the host computer;

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an error detecting unit detecting an error of the image forming



device;

5 a first warning unit controlling, when the error is detected by the error detecting unit, an operation/display unit to display a repair call activation menu thereon that indicates a defective condition of the image forming device and enables a user to decide whether activation of a repair call transmitting function is allowed or not;

a second warning unit controlling a warning device to produce at least a warning sound indicating the defective condition of the image forming device; and

10 a warning executing unit executing selectively one or both of the warning control of the first warning unit and the warning control of the second warning unit, wherein, when the defective condition of the image forming device continues for a time, exceeding a predetermined period, without taking any repairing action, the  
15 warning executing unit executing either one of the warning controls of the first and second warning units or both.

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18. The remote monitoring system according to claim 17, wherein the image forming device further comprises a warning condition setting unit that changes initial setting data, including a validity flag of the first warning unit and a validity flag of the  
25 second warning unit, in accordance with user demands.

19. The remote monitoring system according to claim 17,  
wherein the warning executing unit controls, when a repair call  
button of the repair call activation menu is depressed, the  
communication unit to transmit a repair call to the support center via  
the communication line.

20. The remote monitoring system according to claim 17,  
wherein the warning executing unit inhibits, when a cancel button of  
the repair call activation menu is depressed, the repair call  
transmitting function to transmit a repair call to the support center  
via the communication line.